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ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS OF REVOLUTIONARY  
UNDERGROUND WORK.

(Translation)

The conditions of work of Communist parties are becoming ever more difficult. By every means at their disposal the ruling classes are attempting to check the growth of influence of Communist parties and to put an end to the existence itself of the Communist International. Opportunistic elements in our ranks take advantage of these growing persecutions by the police and the growing terror exercised by industrialists for the purpose of justifying their passivity in the struggle against the offensive of the bourgeoisie upon the labor class. It would be simply foolish to deny that the terror exercised by industrialists and the repressions exercised by the police cause difficulties in individual cases, and for a time even paralyze, the work of the Communist parties and other revolutionary organizations of the proletariat. However, if the terror exercised by the police and the industrialists were an unsurmountable obstacle in the path of development of the Communist parties, the proletariat should in advance abandon the struggle and the hope of throwing off  
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the yoke of capitalism. The present economic crisis, unprecedented as regards depth and duration, which is developing and making more acute the conflicts of interest in the capitalistic system, accelerates the wreck of capitalistic stabilization and thereby places before the proletariat of capitalistic and colonial countries the direct task of preparing a revolutionary issue out of the crisis notwithstanding growing police repressions, and not withstanding all the cruelties of the fascist and social-fascist police-presidents and dictators.

Under those conditions the tasks of Party construction acquire exceptionally great significance. While organizing the Bolshevik Party in an environment of Tsarist underground, Lenin constantly emphasized that organization and once more organization was necessary for victory over Tsarism and that without a strong Party organization, direction of the movement and extension of the movement of the masses is empty talk. In this manner the growing artifices of the police management of bourgeois countries in the struggle against the Communist movement demand from the latter also a more complicated, more pliant, and more efficient organization. Such an organization must inevitably seek support in a strong conspirative organization supplemented by broadly applied methods of illegal Party work. The questions regarding an illegal organization must now be placed in the center of attention of all Communist parties of capitalistic countries without exception; naturally, in countries  
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where the Communist movement is illegal it will be based in a different manner than in countries where Communist parties are still able to work in a legal or at least semi-legal manner.

As regards the second group of countries, it would be a great opportunistic error to suppose that, in connection with the increasing police repressions, legal Communist parties should in the least degree abandon their work or, particularly that they should slacken mass work. The general international environment, the growing left tendencies of the masses, the expansion of new revolutionary enthusiasm demand that all Communist parties increase their activities to the maximum, particularly that they increase mass work. With the maximal increase of mass work it is quite unthinkable to solve the central task set before the Communist parties by the Eleventh plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the tasks of winning over the majority of the toiling class. Consequently, with regard to legal and semi-legal Communist parties the question of reconstructing the Party system and the methods of work in the present conditions of an ever increasing terror on the part of the police and the industrialists consists in the methods of Party work which should be put into practice in order to increase the work connected with the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, notwithstanding police repressions. In order to solve this problem it is necessary first of all to start immediately the creation, in addition to a legal Party organization

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organization which continues to function, of an illegal organization which will gradually take over the functions of the legal one, as the latter is being dissolved by police repressions, and which will also perform specific functions arising out of the sharpening of class struggle; for example, the organization of the protection of speakers, Party buildings, and the further training of the Party for higher forms of struggle. Gradually, as the dissolution of the legal Party organization is proceeding, the leading functions will inevitably pass on in an ever greater measure to the illegal organization. This reconstruction of the work will inevitably require a regrouping of Party forces and a reconstruction of the Party organization and of the methods of Party work. The question of protecting leading Party activists from arrests and other similar repressions directed against them enters therein as a component and subordinate part.

One can imagine a Party organization held in such secrecy that the police does not even suspect its existence. But if this Party organization, in its effort to conceal itself from the police, becomes also invisible to the toiling masses, such a Party organization by that fact alone loses its most important trait, that of being a vanguard organization of the toiling class, and turns from an organization of the Communist Party into an impotent group of conspirators. The first steps toward creating an illegal Party organization go in the following principal directions:

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directions: (a) premises for the storing of Party archives should be secured; (b) illegal printing offices, where Party organs could be printed in the event that legal Party newspapers and periodicals are closed and prohibited, should be organized; (c) a staff for the distribution of illegal Party literature should be created;\* preparations should be made for the transfer of a definite group of leading Party activists to an illegal position; (e) addresses and quarters for illegal correspondence, for secret meetings of the leading Party organs, as well as for hiding illegal Party activists and for their meetings with workers still remaining in a legal position, should be provided; (f) a minimal number of workers, well versed in the elementary rules of underground technique (work in the illegal printing office, cypher work, technique in oral and written communications, technique of defense of the illegal section of the Party organization, etc.), should be trained.

Measures, accordingly, should be taken to guarantee that (a) no documents which could give the police a pretext for repressions against the Party on the basis of existing laws and police regulations are kept on the legal premises of the Party under any conditions; (b) all Party members are warned with regard to the keeping of secret Party documents

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\* (d) evidently omitted. Translator's note.

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(every Party member should know what documents are secret and what information can, or must not, be given to the police); (c) a definite section from among Party activists should refrain from visiting Party institutions which function in a legal manner. These institutions themselves should in substance be transformed into legal possibilities for contact and connection of the Party with the masses; it is necessary that laborers who sympathize with the Party or are, in general, non-partisans, and who have no contact with Party organizations driven into the underground, might, through such addresses, establish this contact and might transmit necessary information, of interest to the Communist Party, as well as receive answers to questions of interest to them. Three such openly (in a legal and semi-legal manner) existing Party institutions might be pointed out in the first instance:

(1) The premises of the Party committee where the representative of the Party committee is present at definite hours and receives all persons who approach him on Party business. With regard to these premises it is imperative to avoid, as a rule, on the part of comrades who are leading Party activists, any visits to these quarters, as well as the organization therein of meetings of the Party committee or of Party activists.

(2) A second no less, and even more important legal Party organ which must be utilized in the widest manner for open contact of the Party driven underground with

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with the masses, is the legal Party newspaper which depends for support on a broad network of labor correspondents and village correspondents.

(3) Finally, the Communist factions in parliaments and municipal institutions are the third organ.

The experience of the Russian Bolshevik Party which, in conditions of profound underground work, succeeded in utilizing very broadly with immense profit for the Party, the tribune of the State Duma and the PRAVDA, must be well mastered and widely applied by all Communist parties without exception. It is incumbent upon Communist parties to mobilize the broadest masses for struggle against all reactionary attempts to eliminate any such legal and semi-legal possibilities. It is particularly important to stand up for the right to publish a daily legal Party paper. The history of the Russian Bolshevik Party gives a series of brilliant examples of the manner in which this should be done: editors should be selected in advance for the purpose of replacing the ones arrested, new newspaper titles should be on hand in the case of a newspaper closing, other legal printing offices should be found beforehand for instances when the one where the paper is usually published cannot be used, collection of funds for covering expenses connected with the payment of fines and the confiscation of individual numbers, etc., should be organized, a special staff for independent distribution of Party newspapers in case official organs refuse to distribute them under pressure of  
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the police, should be kept in view, etc.

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In connection with the attempts of the ruling classes to drive the Communist parties underground, particular importance is acquired by the work of the Party within mass legal organizations of various types, first of all in the labor unions, as well as in organizations devoted to sport, organizations of free thinkers, unions of persons renting apartments, the International Red Aid (MOPR), etc. The Party which has at its disposal within those organizations its own strong factions which act in accordance with instructions from illegal (or semi-legal) Party leadership, will retain (and develop) the possibility of conducting mass ideological and organizational work. One should not think, however, that this applies only to mass organizations which are directed by the Communist Party. The Party must and can (this is one of its regular and most important organizational tasks) create its fractions also in mass organizations directed by social-fascist and openly reactionary leaders. This apparently is possible in conditions of the most severe reaction, as, for example, in modern Italy where, according to data, confirmed by the bourgeois press, cases of manifestation of open sympathy to slogans of the revolution even in the ranks of fascist militia are becoming more and more constant. The Party, resting for support on fractions in social-fascist and other reactionary mass organizations, can begin, on the one hand, systematic work tending to corrupt these organizations



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organizations and to win over the peasants and laborers in their ranks, and can utilize, on the other hand, these organizations as one of the forms of legal possibilities which can be put to use even under white terror.

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While struggling by every measure for the possibility of carrying on open mass work, all legal Communist parties must immediately make one branch of Party work undoubtedly illegal. This branch of Party work is the work at the enterprises, the work of factory and plant germ-cells.

It is now imperative to build up factory and plant germ-cells as illegal organizations and to have them utilize illegal methods in their work; similarly as in respect of Party work as a whole, this reconstruction of the factory and plant germ-cells must be accompanied by a maximal fortification of their mass work at their enterprises.

What should be done for this purpose?

First of all, members of the Party working at enterprises - with the exception of cases demanding open action in the name of the Communist Party - should, by their conduct, give no occasion to people surrounding them to consider them members of the Communist Party. Accordingly, it is necessary, for example, to arrange the meetings of Communist germ-cells as closed and secret meetings, only the most trusted sympathizers being admitted. It is best not to use real names and surnames, but to use pseudonyms at Party meetings and in general when addressing one another on Party affairs.

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The principal methods of daily mass Party work, therefore, should be: (a) individual agitation; (b) agitation and organization of work with the assistance of factory and plant newspapers, pamphlets, and other Party legal and illegal literature; (c) as a rule, the drawing of Party members not working at the respective institutions into more open mass work; (d) the utilization to the maximal degree of every kind of legal and semi-legal possibility, the creation of works-and-factory labor union groups, the International Red Aid (MOPR), the International Labor Relief (Meshrabpom), free thinkers, various clubs - clubs for the study of music, clubs for the study of mathematics, etc., etc., at the enterprise, and finally, the penetration absolutely into every plant organization of the enemy wherever they exist. The most detailed information on all these questions may be found in the instructions of the organizational department of the Executive Committee of the Communist International which was published in the form of excerpts in the COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL during the beginning of the current year (see "Concerning the work of works-and-factory germ-cells" in No. 1-2 of the COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL for January 1931).

Successful work connected with the revolutionary mobilization of the masses in an environment of deepening crisis and of the shattering of the state machinery will permit the Communist Parties to move the struggle to a higher level. Finding support in the growing political consciousness and improved organization of the masses and possessing a Party organization

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tion better protected from police and fascist blows, the Communist Parties will be able to smash the framework of the police states (Politskogo Gosudarstva), and to upset and eliminate in an unauthorized manner all limitations for revolutionary agitation and organization.

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The same question of shattering of the framework of police and fascist dictatorship is coming now into the center of organizational tasks and of illegal Communist Parties, first of all in those fascist countries where elements of a revolutionary crisis are ripening, as in Poland.

The opinion that the principal flaw in the work of illegal Communist Parties is the lack of experience and practice in conspiracy, is widely spread in the ranks of illegal Communist Parties. One, certainly, should not under-evaluate the significance of practice in illegal work when organizing the work of Communist Parties under present conditions. But at the same time it is imperative to establish in the firmest manner that precisely under present conditions, while improving methods of conspiracy and fortifying the illegal Party organization, one should simultaneously concentrate one's attention principally on the tasks of utilising semi-legal and legal possibilities in order to develop with their assistance broad mass ideological and organizational work and in order to smash police barriers, organizing revolutionary actions of peasants and laborers and thereby clearing the way for open mass Party work.

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The opinion that mass actions cannot be organized in conditions of deep underground work, which is widely spread in the ranks of the Communist Parties, represents an extremely damaging opportunistic deviation which may be refuted, primarily, by numerous examples from the most recent times. Besides, if such an assertion were true, what sense would there be in general in the existence of illegal Communist Parties? Certain Italian comrades from the former right-opportunistic group of Santino declared, in this connection, that the revolution would arise from spontaneous movements of the masses in countries where Communist Parties are illegal. This argument is plainly rotten. There are many instances in history of spontaneous revolutionary movements which ended in a rapid fall of the reactionary governments. The most recent example is the fall of the Spanish monarchy. However, it is precisely the example of Spain which inflicts a blow first of all on the authors of that theory. While fear before a growing irresistible revolutionary movement of the masses might have brought about the replacing of monarchy by a republic in Spain, this replacing of monarchy by a republic was not accompanied by the destruction of the old order, and of its economic basis, and the republic itself was designed to play the part of a smoke screen of counter-revolution and of a kind of counter-revolutionary dam against the revolution precisely because systematic training and firm leadership of the movement on the part of the Communist Party were lacking. Here again white terror might be referred to. Such a point of view

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view should be eliminated once and for all. One of the two: either white terror excludes the possibility of systematic preparation on the part of the Communist Party to seize authority, and in this case the Communist Party should be disbanded and one should patiently wait for spontaneous explosions, or the Communist Party can carry on, under any terror, its work of training the masses for the seizure of authority and can lead this struggle, and in that case references to white terror as to an unsurmountable obstacle for the mass work of the Communist Parties, are superfluous, and the work of the Party should be developed on a basis of preparing the masses, notwithstanding all difficulties, to the wreck of fascism and the seizure of authority.

The Polish Communist Party proved that, in conditions of Pilsudski fascism, the Communist Party of Poland is able to prepare and to direct strikes on a large scale and is able to organize serious mass demonstrations similar to those which took place in Poland, for example, on May 1, 1931. The heroic Communist Party of China gave an example of the manner in which to work within yellow Kuomintang unions and how to utilize the thoroughly reactionary statutes of these unions as a certain kind of legal possibility, drawing in this fashion thousands of proletarians into important strike action (the movement of post and telegraph laborers and employees). Simultaneously, the Communist Party of China proved that, if the work of fractions is efficient, the premises and clubs of the Kuomintang unions may be utilized for purposes of mass and politically

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cally systematic agitation for the overthrow of the Nanking Government and for the triumph of the workers' and peasants' revolutionary-democratic dictatorship.

The shattering of policy framework must first of all be organized in an unauthorized manner at the enterprises on the basis of drawing in the toiling masses into a struggle for their most urgent demands, various organs of struggle elected by the masses of laborers (strike committees, etc.) being organized in the course of the work. It is then necessary to strive at having these organs of struggle stabilized and to have them transformed into regular elective organs representing the toiling masses at the respective enterprises.

Such plant organs representing the interests of the laborers and organized in an unauthorized manner became created in the course of all past revolutions, in an environment of growing revolutionary enthusiasm, when powerful mass movements came into existence. Now also one should base oneself on the same prospects and should accordingly reconstruct Party organization and the methods of Party work.

In a word, an illegal organization should be created where it does not exist and should be fortified in places where it exists. But in accomplishing this it is necessary to base oneself on an absolutely definite and very firm policy - to strengthen and develop mass work to the maximum, and to increase to the maximum the organizational training of the broadest masses for pending battles. The blows of fascist  
terror

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terror should be answered by the organization of a gap in the framework of police and fascist dictatorship and by further self-denying, systematic, Bolshevik preparation of the final victory of the toiling class.

It is necessary to supplement these short considerations on the tasks of revolutionary underground work in the present conditions of an acute sharpening of the general crisis of capitalism and of the growth of a new revolutionary enthusiasm by another most important statement which refers both to the legal and to the illegal Communist Parties.

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It is impossible to offer successful resistance to reaction and to build an excellent revolutionary underground organization connected with the masses without strong illegal plant germ-cells and without the reconstruction of the entire work of the Communist Party on a basis of plant germ-cells; it is impossible, in the case of illegal Communist Parties, to reckon, without the existence of strong plant germ-cells, on the possibility of organizing and leading the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of the police and fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. These conclusions have already received full confirmation in the positive sense (in the experience of the great October revolution) and in the negative sense (for example in Germany, in 1923). At the present time, it is imperative to take up the question regarding the work of plant germ-cells with particular

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particular force. The discussion of the first item on the agenda of the Eleventh plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International tended to show that the situation as regards plant germ-cells continues to remain unsatisfactory in all countries, as well as in parties which occupy the most responsible sections of the revolutionary front - in the Communist Parties of Germany and Poland. Why does this occur? The principal cause is the absence of a necessary change in the parties and, first of all of a change in the leading activists. The difficulties of the work at enterprises are very great and will become still greater in the future. But these difficulties demand only a greater mobilization of the Party forces, and that is still lacking. Even the Communist Party of Germany (the best and strongest Communist Party of capitalistic countries), which gave brilliant examples of a truly Bolshevik systematic attitude in the struggle against "left" Trotskyist and openly opportunist deviations, and which, from that angle, carried through a serious renovation of its leading cadres, failed to regard the question of plant germ-cells with similar acuteness. Meanwhile, the slackness and vacillations in questions connected with the reconstruction of the Party on the basis of plant germ-cells threaten, at the present moment, all Communist Parties, and first of all the Communist Parties which are struggling at the front of the class struggle, with the most serious consequences. The Communist Party of Germany is now rapidly expanding but at the same time, according to the data of

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the PARTEIARBEITER for May 1931, five-sixths of the local organizations have not yet been subdivided into plant and street germ-cells. Such a situation is an evidence of the clearly unsatisfactory execution of the instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany and of the Communist International concerning reorganization on the basis of plant germ-cells, by the organizations of the Communist Party of Germany, and shows that the manner of instructing the local organizations of the Communist Party of Germany on the part of district committees is as yet unsatisfactory. Simultaneously the threat of prohibition of the German Communist Party is becoming ever more actual, while the growth of the elements of revolutionary crisis makes the task of direct preparation for struggle for authority ever more actual to the Party. Both the necessity to retain one's forces when moving underground and the preparation for battles for authority are impossible without a resolute reconstruction of the entire system of Party work and of the entire Party organization on the basis of plant germ-cells. The events in Poland, the growth of the revolutionary activity of the masses in Italy and in other countries where fascist dictatorship is prevalent, make the question regarding plant germ-cells acute for illegal Communist Parties, particularly for the Polish Communist Party.

In this manner, the coming period must be, for all Communist Parties, whether legal or illegal, first of all a period of fortification of their work at enterprises, a

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terprises, a period of fortification of plant germ-cells. Accordingly, success in the work of the Party will, first of all, be defined by the progress of Party construction which is an indispensable preliminary condition for overcoming the backwardness of the Party in comparison to the growth of the revolutionary activity of the masses, while the progress of Party construction will, primarily, depend on the successes achieved in the sphere of fortifying plant germ-cells: therein lies the foundation of successful struggle against police repressions and terror on the part of industrialists, therein lies the basis of a successful preparation for a revolutionary issue from the crisis, of a multiplication, fortification, and activation of plant germ-cells, here is the principal means for eliminating the mass influence of social-fascism and for winning over the majority of the toiling class under slogans of struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat.